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V CORPS MILITARY POLICE, INTELLIGENCE SOLDIERS TRAIN TOGETHER FOR AFGHANISTAN MISSIONS

By David Ruderman

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

HOHENFELS, Germany — Military police Soldiers so dominated the show here in early December that infantry, armor and artillery Soldiers couldn't get arrested if they wanted to.

That's when V Corps MPs and military intelligence units commandeered the Combined Maneuver Training Center for Warrior Focus, a two-week mission rehearsal exercise for deployment to Afghanistan in 2005.

"It's great to get the opportunity to train as a whole battalion for once," said 1st Lt. Andrea Leaman, 92nd MP Company

executive officer. "It's really great to get to see who else is an MP and work with them. We have quite a few Soldiers in the company who've been to Afghanistan or to



KARL WEISEL

Soldiers role-playing as Afghan villagers run from a building as Sgt. Christopher Hooper (left) and Pfc. Nicholas Chimenti of V Corps' 212th Military Police Company approach to take out a sniper during Warrior Focus, a two-week training exercise at the Hohenfels (Germany) Training Area.

Iraq. It's also helpful that we've got people who've worked detention centers in Gitmo [Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, Cuba] and Iraq."

The Baumholder, Germany-based 92nd and the Kitzingen, Germany-based 212th MP Company wrapped up months of training with platoon- and company-level exercises and qualifications in the most realistic field environment possible, said officials.

"A CMTC rotation with all its resources is entirely online for our battalion, an MP battalion. We absolutely couldn't do this without these resources," said Maj. James Wilson, executive officer of Hanau, Germany's 709th MP Battalion, which ran the exercise.

MP Soldiers from the battalion's 92nd, with Soldiers assigned to Baumholder, Hanau and Darmstadt, Germany, as well as the 212th, will deploy along with Company E of the corps' 165th Military Intelligence Battalion, also based in Darmstadt.

The MI troops were an integral part of Warrior Focus.

"It's the first time MPs and Military Intelligence are training together," claimed Capt. Jeremy Kerfoot, 709th MP Battalion adjutant. Senior NCOs from the 709th's 527th MP Company, based in Giessen, and the 793rd MP Battalion's 615th MP Company, based in Grafenwoehr, rounded out the complement of MPs on hand, serving as controllers, role players and teachers.

"They're the subject experts, because they deployed with us in OIF1 [the first iteration of Operation Iraqi Freedom]," said Kerfoot, a platoon leader during the

709th's deployment to Baghdad in 2003. "A lot of the lessons learned (there) are being initiated here."

Among them is training that reflects a heightened sensitivity to handling detainees, or Persons Under U.S. Control as the MPs call them, in the wake of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal earlier this year.

"The Army has now emphasized a lot of briefings stressing ROE [Rules of Engagement], how to treat prisoners and all that stuff, and our battalion's done a great job getting those briefings to us," said Leaman.

Warrior Focus put the MPs through the experience of running Camp Vigilant, a tent complex arranged to simulate a working detention facility. Soldiers acted out the entire process of bringing detainees in to be processed, searched and questioned — part of the mission that awaits them in Afghanistan.

"The CMTC folks actually built this detention facility for us for this exercise," said Wilson. "It's not a standard request, I'm sure."

"The company goes in and takes over the facility," said Maj. Roger Hedgepeth, operations officer for the 709th. "They train on forced cell moves and battle drill. That's when a prisoner acts up, (and) they go in with shields and helmets and take him to protect the other inmates."

Soldiers also trained on other skills that will be vital to their mission, such as using military working dogs; responding to International Committee of the Red Cross visits, and recognizing and responding to MP and interrogator misconduct.

"There are all these scenarios and vignettes programmed in," said Hedgepeth.

"We're looking at all these SOPs [Standard Operating Procedures], down to the Soldier level, to make sure everybody knows what to do. We've replicated all the processing, handling and reporting procedures. One of the key things is linking SOPs and procedures to prevent another Abu Ghraib incident."

To prepare to fully implement those procedures, the MPs trained in concert with the military intelligence Soldiers who will deploy with them.

"We're here to work out the interaction," said Capt. Matthew Palmer, commander of the 165th MI Battalion's Company E, 51st Infantry. "It's their facility. We have a vested interest to make sure that support is in place. If either mission fails, so does the other. I have a company with a lot of experience doing their job — they know the friction points."

Most of his Soldiers have previous deployment experience, either in the Balkans, Afghanistan or Iraq, he said. "This is a monumental event. It's the first time MPs and intelligence Soldiers have trained together before going downrange on a mission in the Global War on Terrorism."

"We have extensive training for this mission, and coordinating with the MPs is a new twist," said Spc. Andre Walker of 165th MI. "They're excellent to work with, and we're melding together. We have enough training, I think, to execute our mission proficiently. I'm not worried about anything. I love the work I do. It saves lives."

"The situation we're dealing with is different than in the past," said Sgt. Lucas Worthy of the 92nd's 1st Platoon. "We've reoriented and re-gearred toward that mission. So far everything's running smoothly."

"I think a lot of the changes focus on the ROE, the basic idea that detainees are human beings and should be treated according to the Golden Rule," said Capt. Jamica Powell, commander of the 9th MP Detachment, which runs the Army detention facility in Mannheim, Germany. She and her Soldiers were on hand to contribute their expertise to the training.

"Bringing the MPs and MI Soldiers together is key to making that shift work. It's actually a lot better and essential in working out the SOPs. What came out of Abu Ghraib was that they weren't meshing. This gives the 709th the opportunity to work through that. It's just putting it in context of working with foreign nationals. It's keeping it in your mind, switching from the role of combat, combat, combat to safekeeping ... and MPs can do that," said Powell.

Soldiers rotated tasks frequently throughout the two-week exercise, said officials.

"They're rotating with someone else, doing another job, so they get experience everywhere," said Capt. Clint Munding, intelligence officer with the 709th. "That's a big part of the training -- to put together people in a variety of roles. That way we get to train them together, rather than in two separate situations. When they get where they're going they'll know each other, have that working relationship, and there won't be any confusion about whose role is what. We concentrate on what most MPs who are put in a detention facility will never see, but it shows them what could happen and (how) to be prepared."

"It's my first deployment, and I'm looking forward to learning my MOS [job]," said Pvt. 2 Andreane Curry, human resources specialist with the 92nd's Headquarters Platoon. "I like being in the office, but when we come to the field it keeps me up to date and together with everyone else."

"We started off doing MP missions — convoy security, cordon and search missions, QRF [Quick Reaction Force]," said Spc. David Saraiva, of the 92nd's 4th Platoon. "I think mostly what I'm learning is detainee operations, because it's completely outside my MOS. You pick up more from it when you're working with someone you don't know. It's the first time we've actually used interpreters."

Mundinger said working through interpreters helps add realism to the training and helps troops get beyond the language concerns of deployment. "You've got to make the bridge," he said. "The gaps that are there -- you've got to overcome them. We think we're capturing the essence of what they're going to do."

"The companies flip every five days from running the detention facility to doing area searches," said Hedgepeth. "The area search mission is four platoon lanes and one company lane. On the fifth day they do a company-level cordon and search with all four lanes involved."

In both sets of scenarios, planners and trainers continually monitored the units' performance and adjusted the scripts to challenge Soldiers beyond their "comfort zones," introducing additional elements to ratchet up the complexity and unpredictability of the exercises, said officials.

"You should be able to take an MP and put him or her on any mission, except maybe firing tanks," said Leaman.

"From Day 1 to Day 5 they were ecstatic with their ability to function the way they can now," said Wilson. "It was like night and day. By the time they finished they felt they could execute to standard."

"They're excited to be doing that because it's something they don't usually do," said Capt. Ann Dunscombe, 212th MP Company commander. "Now they're doing cordon and searches, and they're really pumped."

Getting Soldiers into the appropriate mindset, resisting the tendency to go soft on discipline and SOPs, can save their lives, said Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Johnson of 527th MP Company. "Those are the hard line things we're trying to tell them — it's not always going to be easy."

"We've got to make sure they make a link between the training and the reality," said Dunscombe. "They've never realized that these are real people they're dealing with. They're used to running through situations, shooting things up, and they have to learn that you just can't go through people's houses throwing their things around — not if you want them to be friendly the next time you come around. I think they understand the task, without bullets."

Watching her Soldiers run through combat operations in a mock Afghan village on the Hohenfels range, Dunscombe said they were both motivated and ready to go.

"They know what they signed up for when they joined the Army, so I think they have a genuine concern for the world and a desire to fight for America. They're excited to do their jobs. They're also scared, and they're going to miss their families, but I think it's good when you have that level of awareness. They'll have a better chance. Complacency kills."

"I would say the fear, the apprehension, is more of the unknown," said Leaman.

"Lots of them are young and never deployed before. It's not that they're scared of dying. It's more like they're wondering what they're going to find there, and can they handle it."

"Leadership, discipline and standards are the key to doing a successful mission — and confidence in their leaders," said Wilson.

"Our sergeants are just excellent. Our platoon never failed on anything because they were there. The team leader or the sergeant is the most important person in the unit," said Leaman.

After wrapping up Warrior Focus, most of the MPs were planning on spending time at home with family and friends, making the most of block leave around the holidays.

Sometime in the new year they will head to Afghanistan.

Are any of them wishing they'll be the ones to finally capture Osama bin Laden?

"That's the dream, that the 92nd would be the one," said Leaman.

